ADA Complementary Paratransit Service, Policies & Procedures

North Central Regional Transit District

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ADA Complementary Paratransit Service,

Policies & Procedures

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ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Policies & Procedures

I. General

A. Goal

It is the goal of the North Central Regional Transit District, NCRTD, through its ADA complementary paratransit service, to design, implement and maintain an efficient and effective transportation system for persons with disabilities who are "ADA paratransit eligible."

B. Policy

It is the policy of the NCRTD, in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49, Volume 1, Part 37, Subpart F, Section 37.121 that no otherwise qualified person shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity undertaken by the NCRTD that receives or benefits from federal financial assistance.

C. Purpose

The ADA complementary paratransit service was developed to provide safe and efficient transportation within the Espanola area to persons with disabilities who are "ADA paratransit eligible."

D. Objectives

The specific objectives of the ADA complementary paratransit service are:

1. To provide curb-to-curb, roadway to driveway and based on special need, door-to-door, demand response transportation on specially equipped vehicles designed to accommodate persons with disabilities.

2. To maintain a trained staff for the operation and control of the service.

3. To provide on-going mechanisms for persons with disabilities to provide input on ADA complementary paratransit service, policies and procedures.

4. To provide all public information tools on the NCRTD services in accessible formats.

II. Operations

A. General

ADA complementary paratransit service is provided in accordance with the six service criteria established by the U.S. Department of Transportation for ADA paratransit operations including service area, response time, fares, trip purpose restrictions, hours and days of service and capacity constraints.

B. Service Area

1. Complimentary ADA Service for Espanola Area Fixed* Route

ADA complementary paratransit service shall be provided to origins and destinations within ¾ mile of fixed route service and within the core service area. Para-transit service will also be offered in the same area that demand-response service is offered, that is, in Rio Arriba County within a fifteen mile radius of the Española Park & Ride lot located at Paseo de Onate at Calle Espinosa. Fixed Routes within the Espanola/ Rio Arriba County15 mile radius zone are:

#100 Riverside Drive Route
#110 Westside Española Route
#120 Crosstown Route
#160 Santa Clara Route
#150 Chimayo- Las Trampas Route up to the East Cordova entrance.

2. Complimentary ADA Service on all Regional Area* Fixed Routes

ADA Service shall be provided to origins and destinations within a ¾ mile of regional routes according to FTA's para-transit service guidelines. The type of ADA service provided is Road-to-Driveway service or Curb-to-Curb or Door to Door as needed, when roadway conditions permit.
Regional Area Fixed Routes are:

#180 El Rito Route
#190 Chama Route
#290 Edgewood Route
#280 Eldorado Route
#270 Turquoise Trail Route
#200 Santa Fe Route
#230 San Ildefonso Route
#220 Tesuque Route

#210 Pojoaque-Nambe Route
#310 Red River Route (outside the Miners Transit service area only)
#303 UNM Route (Outside the Chile Line service area only)
#330 Peñasco Route
#320 Questa Costilla Route
#300 Taos Route
#400 Los Alamos Route (serves Los Alamos to Española)
#410 LA-P Route (serves Los Alamos to Pojoaque)

*(see Exhibit B, Espanola ADA service area; and Exhibit C, Regional ADA service area; maps attached)

3. ADA Service – Regional Fixed Route –Safety and Road Requirements

- Roads must be paved or graveled, meet minimal local county maintenance standards:
- Be regularly maintained by the local jurisdiction, including snow removal;
- Have sufficient drainage during heavy rains or during periods of flash flooding;
- Be of sufficient width for 2 large vehicles to operate side to side either direction;
- Have overhead clearance of at least 12';
- Have within reasonable distance from pick up/drop off location a wide point or pullout that would facilitate turning around a 40' vehicle*.
- Locations where lift service is required must have a flat level surface to ensure safe lift deployment.

The Transit Operations and Facilities Director or the Fleet Maintenance and Facilities Manager will make the final determination as to roads meeting the standards listed above.

*****If a smaller, shorter in length bus regularly is utilized on a particular route, the width of the turnaround point may be relaxed by management for flexing on that route.

4. ADA Service To/From Areas Where ADA Service Is Provided By An Agency Other Than NCRTD

In areas where ADA service is being provided by an agency other than the NCRTD, Flex Service can be scheduled to and from common connecting/transfer points where both the other agencies and the NCRTD's services meet for passenger transfers. It is the responsibility of the passenger to schedule with the

other agency any connecting service required to complete their trip. Pre-qualification and fares for ADA services with another agency may be required.

Other agencies that connect with the NCRTD are:

City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe Trails/Santa Fe Rides
(505)-955-2001
(866)-554-7433 - toll free

Los Alamos County, Atomic City Transit
(505)-661-7433

Town of Taos, Chile Line
(505)-751-4459

Red River Miner's Transit
(575)-770-5959

Ohkay Owingeh Popay Messenger Service
505-852-4014

NMDOT Park & Ride
505-424-1110

New Mexico Rail Runner
866-795-7245 – toll free

C. Reservations and Response Time

Two types of service will be available: subscription and reservation.

Subscription service will be offered for any trip that occurs every week, originates and terminates at the same scheduled location, at the same hour each day. Requests for subscription service must be made at least one (1) day prior to the first trip, and may be made up to four (4) days in advance. The number of subscription service trips accepted shall not exceed 50% of the total trips scheduled by all passengers unless there is non-subscription capacity.

Reservation service shall be available for any trip. Requests for reservation service must be made at least one (1) day prior to the desired trip time, and may be made up to four (4) days in advance.

Requests for service shall be accepted from 6:00 a.m. to5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the service day. Requests made one day prior on weekends or holidays between the hours of 6:00 am and 5:00 pm for reservations for service on Monday or the day after a holiday shall be accepted as received on the NCRTD's voice messaging service. Whenever possible a return trip will be scheduled.

Trips shall be scheduled to begin no more than one (1) hour before or after the desired departure time. The trip shall be scheduled so as to arrive at the pick-up location within a 30-minute time frame (see Riding ADA Complementary Paratransit Service, Section IV. C).

D. Fares

The fare for a trip charged to an ADA paratransit eligible user of the complementary paratransit service shall not exceed twice the fare that would be charged to an individual paying full fare on NCRTD's fixed-route system. Thus, no fare will be charged for ADA certified passengers who are picked up and delivered within ¾ of a mile from a fixed route. Payment of the fare must be in cash and in the exact amount. Fares shall be paid at the time of boarding.

Personal care attendants ride free with passengers who require assistance while boarding, riding, or alighting from a vehicle. Passengers must state the need for a personal care attendant on the ADA paratransit eligibility certification application. Dispatcher must be notified at the time the reservation that a personal care attendant will also be riding.

Passengers are guaranteed a seat for at least one accompanying guest. Additional guests will be scheduled on a space-available basis. There is no additional fare charged for guests within the ¾ mile zone of a fixed route. See section VII, D. for fares guests outside the ¾ mile zone.

E. No Trip Purpose Restrictions

Trips for any purpose will be accommodated and will not be prioritized by trip purpose. Passengers may be asked the nature of their trip so as the NCRTD can be prepared to provide appropriate safety measures.

F. Hours and Days of Service

The ADA complementary paratransit service shall operate from 6:00 am. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. No Saturday or Sunday service is provided

Service is not offered on the following holidays:

New Year's Day
Dr. Martin Luther King Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day
Veterans Day
Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Christmas Eve Day
Christmas Day

G. No Capacity Constraints

NCRTD will not constrain capacity by 1) restricting the number of trips an individual will be provided; 2) maintaining waiting lists for access to the service; or 3) any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits the availability of service to ADA paratransit eligible persons.

The following performance data will be collected and monitored by the NCRTD for the purpose of establishing whether capacity constraints exist:

1. Number of late pick-ups or drop-offs for initial or return trips. A pick-up or drop-off is considered late when it is more than twenty (20) minutes past the scheduled pick-up or drop-off time.

2. Number of trip denials or missed trips. Trip denials include rides that are accepted outside the hour scheduling window. Declined round trips will be counted as two (2) denials when one leg of a round trip cannot be scheduled within the hour window and the requester declines the round trip.

3. Number of trips with excessive lengths. Excessive trip length is defined as a trip that takes longer than a reasonable time traveled on a fixed route, this includes the time to and from the stops and waiting for the vehicle. .

4. Number of missed calls on the trip reservation line. Missed calls will be measured by the amount of reservation calls that roll over and go to voicemail.

If, after analysis of the above performance data, NCRTD determines that there are swings in demand when administering its ADA complementary paratransit service,

NCRTD shall increase its capacity to respond to peaks in demand in a way that is comparable to dealing with changes in demand on the fixed route system.

ADA paratransit eligible persons shall have priority on the ADA complementary paratransit service, and tracking for capacity constraints shall be done separately for ADA paratransit eligible persons and others who may use the service.

H. Inclement Weather

In the unlikely event of service cancellation due to inclement weather, NCRTD personnel shall attempt to contact all scheduled passengers at the telephone numbers listed on the ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Eligibility Application.

I. Lost and Found

Neither NCRTD nor its service contractor will be responsible for items left on vehicles. However, if found, the item(s) will be held for thirty (30) days. If the item is not claimed within thirty (30) days, it may be donated to a local charitable organization.

Passengers attempting to locate lost items should call the NCRTD office. If the passenger's item has been located, every effort will be made to return the item to the passenger on his/her next scheduled trip.

III. Eligibility and Certification Procedures

A. General Eligibility

To receive ADA complementary paratransit service, individuals must be certified "ADA paratransit eligible," per the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, to include:

1. Any individual with a disability who is unable, as the result of a physical or mental impairment (including a vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride or disembark from any vehicle on the system which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

2. Any individual with a disability who needs the assistance of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device and is able, with such assistance, to board, ride and disembark from any vehicle which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities if the individual wants to travel on a route on the system during the hours of operation of the system at a time, or within a reasonable period of time, when such a vehicle is not being used to provide designated public transportation on the route.

3. Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition which prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system.

Generally the following four tests are applied when determining an applicant's eligibility:

1. Does the individual's disability prevent him/her from getting to and from a bus stop at the point of origin or destination?

2. Can the individual board, utilize and disembark the vehicle at the bus stop?

3. Can the individual recognize the destination and disembark the bus?

4. If the passenger's trip requires transfers, are the paths of travel between routes accessible and navigable by the individual?

B. Trip-By-Trip Eligibility

While there are some passengers who are eligible to ride ADA complementary paratransit service for all their transportation needs, most passengers are certified for service on a trip-by-trip basis. In other words, passengers who may normally be able to ride NCRTD fixed-route service may be eligible for certain trips on the Curb-to-Curb or Roadway to Driveway service. Examples include:

1. An impairment-related condition that makes the person severely sensitive to cold or hot temperatures.

2. A person unable to maneuver a wheelchair through snow.

3. An individual with cognitive disabilities who must use a route other than the one he/she has learned or been trained to ride.

4. An individual who must travel an alternate route due to circumstances, where this alternate route is inaccessible to persons with disabilities.

C. Eligibility for Visitors and Out-of-Area Residents

Visitors to the Espanola area who present documentation that they are ADA paratransit eligible in the jurisdiction in which they reside shall be allowed to use the NCRTD service. If a visitor does not present such documentation, NCRTD may require the visitor to present documentation of his/her place of residence and, if the individual's disability is not apparent, of his/her disability. NCRTD will accept a certification from the visitor that he/she is unable to use fixed route transit.

NCRTD shall make the service available to visitors for any combination of twenty one (21) days during any 365-day period beginning with the visitor's first use of the service.

The location of an applicant's residence is not a factor in determining eligibility. Persons living outside the service area can be certified for the ADA complementary paratransit service. However, only trips with both an origin and destination inside the service area will be provided.

D. Application Process

The applicant shall return the completed ADA Paratransit Application to the NCRTD office. To be considered complete, all of the information requested on the application must be entered and the application must be signed by the applicant. In addition, the Professional Verification Form must be completed and signed by a qualified licensed professional.

*See Exhibit A, Paratransit Application.

NCRTD staff will attempt to make a determination from the information included in the ADA Paratransit Application. Should the staff be unable to make a determination based upon the information provided, they may request clarification from the applicant or the professional who completed the Professional Verification Form.

If a determination still cannot be made, NCRTD may require applicants to submit to a functional assessment to determine if they can use the regular fixed-route bus service. NCRTD will pay the cost of the functional assessment as well as provide transportation to and from the appointment.

NCRTD staff will normally make a determination regarding eligibility within twenty on (21) days of receipt of a complete ADA Paratransit Application. Should the staff fail to make such a determination within the twenty one (21)-day period, the applicant will be "presumed eligible" until such time a determination has been made.

When applications are approved, applicants will be notified by mail they have been certified to use ADA complementary paratransit service for three years, if they are permanently disabled; or for a shorter, specified time if their disability is temporary. Certified passengers may begin using service immediately following notification.

When applicants are deemed eligible for ADA complementary paratransit service, they will be asked to complete the certification process by scheduling an appointment to obtain a photo identification card within thirty (30) days.

At any time during a passenger's three-year certification, NCRTD staff may require the certified passenger to submit a new ADA Paratransit Application if there is sufficient

cause to believe the passenger's condition has changed making the person no longer "ADA paratransit eligible."

Applicants who are deemed ineligible for ADA complementary paratransit may appeal by following the procedure established in Section VIII, Appeal Procedures. Applicants denied service may reapply for the service at any time.

All passenger information will be kept confidential by the NCRTD staff unless a release is required by law or court order.

IV. Passenger Responsibilities

A. General Passenger Condition

All passengers must be able to sit in a bus seat or wheelchair in order to be transported.

Any passenger whose medical condition is such that the passenger is incoherent or requires immediate medical attention to sustain life may be denied service. ADA complementary paratransit service is to be considered a "common carrier" and does not perform ambulance or emergency service.

If the driver reasonably believes a passenger's physical condition or conduct is hazardous, or if a passenger possesses weapons, instruments or equipment that are reasonably believed to be dangerous, or if the passenger presents a direct threat to others, service may be terminated immediately. The passenger will be notified of his/her right to appeal the termination and NCRTD will hear the appeal as soon as reasonably possible.

B. Reservations

Reservation for service are accepted one (1) day or up to four (4) days in advance prior to the desired trip time. Same day reservations are accepted on a space available basis. In order to schedule a trip, one must speak (either in person or via telephone messaging) with NCRTD staff that will require the following in scheduling a trip:

1. Name
2. Phone Number
3. Pick-Up Address
4. Destination Address
5. Desired Pick-Up Time
6. Desired Drop-Off Time (Appointment Time)
7. Number of Passengers
8. If Round Trip, Approximate Time of Return Trip

Passengers can schedule service by calling NCRTD at 1-866-206-0754 from 6:00 a.m. to5:00 p.m. the day prior to service. Requests made one day prior on weekends or holidays between the hours of 6:00 am and 5:00 pm for reservations for service on Monday or the day after a holiday shall be accepted as received on the NCRTD's voice messaging service. Whenever possible a return trip will be scheduled.

C. Riding ADA Complementary Paratransit Service

Paratransit passengers shall be ready to go ten (10) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time. NCRTD makes every effort to arrive as close to the scheduled pick-up time as possible. However, NCRTD may arrive up to ten (10) minutes before or twenty (20) minutes after the scheduled pick-up time.

Example: If you schedule a 9:30 a.m. pick-up, the vehicle may arrive between 9:20 a.m. and 9:50 a.m.

This thirty (30) minute window (consisting of ten (10) minutes before to twenty (20) minutes after the scheduled time) is called the "pick-up time period." Drivers, after arriving within the pick-up time period, will wait up to five (5) minutes. Any passenger who is not at his/her scheduled pick-up point and ready to go by that time will be considered a "no show" and the driver will leave to pick up other riders. The driver will not return for a second attempt. The only exception will be passengers who have been detained during a medical appointment.

If a passenger knows that he/she will be detained during a medical appointment, the passenger shall call NCRTD at 1-866-206-0754 as soon as possible. When the passenger is ready, he/she shall call NCRTD and the next available van will be dispatched to pick up the passenger.

Service may not be rendered if the vehicle cannot access the origin or destination location, or if the location does not provide safe passage for the vehicle or safe access to the vehicle by the passenger. The driver shall immediately call the dispatcher for further instructions in such case. Locations where lift deployment is required must have flat level surfaces to ensure safety for the client and safe operation of the lift.

Drivers are not permitted to enter a passenger's home under any circumstance.

Drivers are not permitted to maneuver a wheelchair up or down more than one step. This rule is provided for the safety of the passenger and the driver.

Drivers are not permitted to lift passengers.

Passengers must pay their fares upon boarding the bus. Failure to do so may result in no service for that trip and the recording of a "no show" or cancellation (see Section IV, E, "No Shows" and Cancellations).

If all other passengers on the vehicle are required to wear seat belts, ADA complementary paratransit service passengers shall also be required to wear seat belts. A physician's statement of a passenger's physical inability to wear a seat belt may waive this requirement.

Profanity or abusive conduct shall not be permitted and may result in suspension or termination of service.

Eating or smoking is not allowed on NCRTD vehicles. Drinking is permissible only from a hard container with a snap-on or screw type lid.

D. Transportation of Children

The minimum age for a child to travel alone aboard ADA complementary paratransit service vehicles is 10 years of age. Children under the age of 10 must have a guardian of legal age accompany them during transport.

E. "No Shows" and Cancellations

If riders are unable to keep the scheduled appointment time, they should notify NCRTD at least two hours prior to the scheduled pick-up time. Failure to do so may result in the recording of a "no show." A record of all "no shows" will be maintained at the "NCRTD office.

Three (3) "no shows" within a 30 day period (counting from the last incident) for reasons other than those of a necessary or emergency nature, as determined by the NCRTD Transit Operations and Facilities Director, shall result in suspension of service for a period of 30 days. The passenger will be given an opportunity for a hearing prior to the suspension.

F. Accommodation of Wheelchairs and Mobility Devices

NCRTD will accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices. "A Wheelchair is a mobility aid belonging to any class of three or more wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered."

Service may be denied if the mobility device poses a risk to "Legitimate safety requirements." Legitimate safety requirements are such circumstances as mobility devices that are too wide or heavy for a wheelchair lift, or so large they would block an aisle or would interfere with the safe evacuation of passengers in an emergency.

All wheelchairs and other mobility devices must be secured to the floor of the vehicle using the in-vehicle securement equipment. The drivers will make every effort not to damage wheelchairs or mobility devices with the securement straps and hooks. In the case where a mobility device is incapable of being properly secured by the securement devices, the driver will notify the rider and will recommend the rider transfer to a seat. In those cases it will be up to the rider whether or not to continue with the ride.

G. Personal Care Attendants and Companions

A personal care attendant (i.e., someone designated or employed specifically to help the eligible individual meet his/her personal needs) always may ride with the eligible individual at no cost.

A companion (e.g., friend or family member) does not count as a personal care attendant unless the eligible individual regularly makes use of a personal care attendant and the companion is actually acting in that capacity.

As part of the initial eligibility certification process, an individual must indicate whether he/she travels with a personal care attendant. If someone does not indicate the use of an attendant, then any individual accompanying him/her would be regarded simply as a companion.

H. Service Animals and Pets

Service animals are welcome aboard NCRTD vehicles. A service animal is any guide dog, or other animal trained to perform tasks for an individual with a disability. Service animals are not pets. They are working animals that are specially trained to provide assistance. To travel on a NCRTD vehicle service animal must:

- Be on a leash or in a container, be under it person's control and behave appropriately
- Remain at their person's feet or in their lap, but may not sit on a vehicle seat
- Birds, reptiles, amphibians and rodents must be kept within an enclosed carrier or container
- Not show aggressive tendencies towards people or other animals

Under control and well behaved are the defining characteristics. The care and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. In addition, consumers traveling with animals are subject to the same general rules that apply to all. If an animal is not under the control or if its behavior is disruptive or menacing, NCRTD can refuse service or the consumer, may have to make other arrangements. Service animals must be under physical restraint by the owner at all times. Service animals that are disruptive, threatening or intimidating will be handled in a case by case discipline process.

I. Carry-On Packages

Drivers will help passengers take lightweight items off the vehicle and set them on the curb. If additional assistance is required, this assistance may be rendered on a case-by-case basis.

V. Public Involvement

A. Goal

NCRTD is committed to providing on-going mechanisms to involve the public in decisions regarding its services, policies and procedures.

B. Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

Consumer satisfaction survey forms will be mailed one time each year to all certified ADA complementary paratransit service passengers. These surveys will measure customer satisfaction with aspects of NCRTD services including prompt telephone answering, scheduler courtesy, ability to get requested pick-up time, timeliness of pick-ups and drop-offs, response time for return trip, amount of time traveling, courtesy of drivers, level of assistance by drivers, safety of service and general satisfaction with service. The results of these surveys will be compiled and reported to the NCRTD Board of Directors.

C. Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held on an as-needed basis to obtain input from persons with disabilities on such topics as proposed service changes, proposed fare increases, and other similar topics.

D. Focus Groups

Focus groups made up of persons with disabilities and representatives from agencies serving the needs of persons with disabilities will be held on an ad hoc basis to deal with specific service and policy issues that require in-depth discussion.

VI. Public Information Dissemination

A. Goal

NCRTD is committed to providing information about its services, policies and procedures to the public in accessible formats for persons with disabilities.

B. Accessible Formats

NCRTD makes use of an operator-assisted RELAY service so that persons with hearing or speech impairments may, by dialing 711, communicate with and receive information from NCRTD staff.

Persons with vision impairments may request braille information through the State library, or request NCRTD provide big font print, or request information via New Mexico School for the Blind reader service.

VII. Appeal Procedures

A. Goal

NCRTD has adopted the following appeal procedures as the mechanism for resolving complaints relative to the ADA complementary paratransit services, policies and procedures.

The following administrative procedure has been established to insure prompt and equitable resolution of appeals of any person with a disability that has been denied eligibility for ADA complementary paratransit service. The same appeal procedure will be used for appeals filed by persons who have been notified of a pending service termination or suspension.

B. Appeal Procedure

An applicant/passenger who wishes to appeal an eligibility determination, service suspension or termination must address an appeal, in writing, to the NCRTD within 60 days of the denial of the application or the notification of suspension of service. The appellant will be entitled to be heard in person and to have necessary support, such as a sign interpreter, or may choose to be represented by another person.

The appellant will be notified in writing of the NCRTD decision as soon as possible. NCRTD will not provide paratransit service to the individual pending the determination on appeal. If a decision has not been made within 30 days of the completion of the appeals process, NCRTD will provide paratransit service from that time until and unless a decision to deny the appeal is issued.